

Book reviews

them often centre on the value of maintaining a wild stock for an animal of commercial importance, especially those whose breeding is difficult to control. It is a very complex subject, with almost as many problems and solutions as there are species, but Juliet Clutton-Brock's methodical analysis and stimulating assessment go a long way to providing a substantial base from which to tackle it.

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Forest Life and Adventures in The Malay Archipelago

Eric Mjöberg

Oxford University Press, Singapore, 1988, 201 pp., HB £4.95

Originally published in Stockholm in Swedish in 1928; first published in English by George Allen and Unwin Ltd in 1930.

In this age of excellent wildlife documentary films and superbly illustrated books, reprints of books by early natural historians and explorers might seem to be irrelevant (although first editions are valuable). They have a great fascination, however, in reflecting a time when words were the main medium of description—in illustrating the versatility of the English language—and to those interested in tracing the development of knowledge about exotic habitats and wildlife, and of achievements in exploration.

Eric Mjöberg spent eight years in the Orient, mainly on Borneo where he was head of the Sarawak Museum. He spent much time living rough as he wandered 1750 miles in all into the 'darkest recesses' of the island, his epic journeys being up the Baram river to Gunung Murud, and up the Mahakam river to Gunung Tibang, on the Sarawak–Kalimantan border, returning down the Kajan river. Rather than describe such journeys, he describes systematically what he has learnt about the animals and plants of these tropical forests.

Accompanied throughout by line drawings and interesting black-and-white photographs, he then moves on to primates—the orang-utan (about which 'he has nothing but good to say of this worthy forest philosopher', but which he ill-treats in collecting two specimens for the Sarawak Museum, according to his sordid

description of the hunt—not the only unsavoury aspect of the book), gibbons, macaques, langurs, the proboscis monkey ('a human caricature in flesh and blood'), slow loris and tarsier (which he perceives to be more closely related to monkeys than lemurs). He concludes his mammalian survey with the serow (goat–antelope) and pangolin, before moving on to birds where the argus pheasant ('proudest and most pugnacious bird in the Malay Archipelago') and edible nests are emphasized.

Lower vertebrates figure prominently: snakes (including cobras and a python that consumed a caged pig and then could not leave the cage), turtles (with 15,000 eggs selling for £15), a montane flying frog and various fishes, including one that walks on land and climbs trees. With invertebrates we learn about Mjöberg's painstaking unravelling of the mystery of the trilobite larvae, which had baffled people since their discovery in 1831, as well as about bees and honey, scorpions, millipedes, butterflies, gnats and mosquitoes (the worst pests of all in the forest!).

He waxes lyrical about the general characters of Borneo's primaeva forests, before describing pitcher plants, the collection of camphor and rubber and the 'most delicious fruits on earth'; like this reviewer his favourite is the mangosteen ('of which it is impossible to eat enough . . . a defect in the eater rather than the fruit') rather than the durian (also favoured by tiger and orang-utan), which smells of 'perspiring feet and rotten bananas'.

He concludes with a description of *Rafflesia* and advice to his successors, which includes being sound, healthy and adaptable, and consuming seven pints of water and two alcoholic drinks (but after the heat of the day) and taking two (not three) baths each day; various other 'dos and don'ts' are detailed but the key point is to be born under a lucky star! Thus, there is an host of intriguing information expressed succinctly and humorously with, regretfully, the odd dash of horror. Overall, a useful little volume complementing well the natural history studies of Hose (1929) in Sarawak and the more anthropological annals of Bock (1881), also reporting on travels in Borneo and Sumatra—both recently reprinted by Oxford University Press.

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References

Bock, C. 1881. *The Head-hunters of Borneo*. London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington (Oxford University Press, 1985).

Hose, C. 1929. *The Field-book of a Jungle-wallah*. London: H. F. and G. Witherby (Oxford University Press, 1985).

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Collins Guide to the Rare Mammals of the World

John A. Burton, illustrated by Bruce Pearson
William Collins Sons & Co. (London), 1987, 240 pp., HB £12.95

1988 IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals

Prepared by the IUCN Conservation Monitoring Centre, Cambridge, in association with the International Council for Bird Preservation

International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, 1988, 154 pp. PB £6 or US\$12. Available from CMC, 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL (postage and packing extra).

Rare Mammals of the World, by the former Executive Secretary of the FFPS, is a testimony to the current species extinction crisis. It describes over 1000 species that might be considered threatened with extinction, including those so poorly known that it is uncertain whether they are flourishing or already extinct, and others that are still widely distributed but are locally threatened.

In standard field guide format the text gives a brief description of the species, a summary of its status in the wild and in captivity, and any protection it receives. A checklist of species in an appendix gives vernacular and scientific names, IUCN threatened categories and CITES appendix listings where these exist, and a 'star' rating indicating the degree of threat based on a system devised by the author. The informative text, Bruce Pearson's attractive paintings, the distribution maps and bibliography make this an invaluable book for anyone interested in mammals and conservation. It will also be a useful starting point for any young conservation scientist intending fieldwork designed to contribute to the knowledge of the world's vanishing mammal fauna and help stem its decline.

The *1988 IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals* is an index of the 555 mammals, 1073 birds, 186 reptiles, 54 amphibians, 596 fishes and 2125

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invertebrates known to IUCN to be threatened with extinction. It is depressingly long, especially when one realizes that there are many many more unlisted species almost certainly under threat. An update of the 1986 list, it is intended to complement the IUCN Red Data Book series, which contain the more detailed information essential for the development of conservation action plans, and will be a convenient information source. It is planned to publish new editions regularly.

Editor.

Birds to Watch: The ICBP World Check-List of Threatened Birds

N. J. Collar and P. Andrew

International Council for Bird Preservation, Technical Publication No. 8, 1988, 303 pp. PB £9.50, including postage from ICBP, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0PJ, UK

The Bird Red Data Books are basic reference texts for the conservation practitioner. A problem, though, is that they take so long to produce that one may be dependent upon out-of-date information between the appearance of the various volumes. There is a need for an interim publication giving a general overview of the situation and this is it. It is a shocker, too; the last global overview, made 10 years ago, lists 290 species while this one covers no fewer than 1029. Over 11 per cent of the world's birds are threatened. As the authors state, the birds in this book are the ones to seek out, survey, monitor and observe.

Roger Wilson.

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